

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### Imagination of the Communist's Role in the Nation-building of Malaya in Malaysian Made Films: 2000-2020

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## **Abstract**

This study concentrates on Malaysian-made films produced between 2000 and 2020 which portray the Communist insurgency and leftist political movements before Malaya/Malaysia's independence. These twin issues fit the demands of an academic investigation as their statuses in the nation-building process occupy controversial and contested positions. The ruling regime's official discourse depicted the MCP and its members as terrorists who brutally sabotaged the country's economic development and political system. However, those who were involved in the Communist struggle and leftist movements have claimed that they contributed to the anti-colonial struggle and spurred the British to grant the newly constituted nation independence. Thus, they believe they deserve recognition and a place in the history of the country's anti-colonial struggles. After the turn of the millennium, some young Malaysian filmmakers were interested in reclaiming Malayan Communism's history and memory, and that of the political left, to challenge the official narrative. These filmmakers renegotiated the idea of what the nation could be via a re-interrogation of its Communist legacy. At the same time, the regime tried to counter these alternative memories by sponsoring Malay Patriotic Films that solidified their master narrative while imposing regulations and policies to contain the film productions that expressed alternative nation-building's vision. Utilizing the framework of Gramscian-influenced Cultural Studies, this study places the films as the site of hegemony struggle, where the meanings and modes of commemoration regarding the nation-building and the Communist struggle are contested.

**Keywords:** Communist-themed films; ethnic politics; Malayan Communist Party; memory; nation-building